
The participants in the 1954 Geneva Conference on Indochina were the Kingdom of Cambodia, the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV), France, the Kingdom of Laos, the People’s Republic of China, the State of Vietnam, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom (Great Britain), and the United States. Although this final Declaration of the Geneva Conference expressed the official consensus of these participants, there were ominous sounds of opposition. A month earlier, US delegate Walter Bedell Smith had telegraphed to Washington his “contempt” for any plan by which the DRV would gain control over the Red River delta in the north. And Secretary of State Dulles was at the same time still considering US armed intervention.1 At the conference, both the State of Vietnam (which contested sovereignty with the DRV) and the United States expressed reservations (see Reading 16). Later, backed by the United States, the State of Vietnam blocked implementation of key Clauses 6 and 7, thus dooming the entire Geneva settlement.

1. The Conference takes note of the agreements ending hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam and organizing international control and the supervision of the execution of the provisions of these agreements.

2. The Conference expresses satisfaction at the end of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam; the Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreements of the cessation of hostilities will permit Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam henceforth to play their part, in full independence and sovereignty, in the peaceful community of nations.

3. The Conference takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and Laos of their intention to adopt measures permitting all citizens to take their place in the national community, in particular by participating in the next general elections, which, in conformity with the constitution of each of these countries, shall take place in the course of the year 1955, by secret ballot and in conditions of respect for fundamental freedoms.

4. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam prohibiting the introduction into Vietnam of foreign troops and military personnel as well as of all kinds of arms and munitions. The Conference also takes note of the declarations made by the Governments of Cambodia and Laos of the material, in personnel, defense of their territory agreements of the cease.

5. The Conference takes note of the declarations of the governments of the foreign State may be estimated having the obligations or any military part of any military or in the service of the declarations that they will not join in any the obligation to participate with the Charter of the peoples of the agreement on security is not threatened.

6. The Conference relating to Vietnam is to be interpreted as constituting expresses its conviction that the declaration and in the aggregate basis for the achievement of a united Vietnam.

7. The Conference declares that political problems, independence, unity, and unity of the fundamental and shall be held as a result of the necessary conditions for the commission, composed of national and local Supervisory Committees. Consultations representative authorities.

8. The provisions of the protection of added and, in particular, to the wishes of the lives.

9. The competent representatives in Vietnam, as well as the individual or collective re
bodia and Laos of their resolution not to request foreign aid, whether in war material, in personnel, or in instructors except for the purpose of the effective defense of their territory and, in the case of Laos, to the extent defined by the agreements of the cessation of hostilities in Laos.

5. The Conference takes note of the clauses in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Vietnam to the effect that no military base under the control of a foreign State may be established in the regrouping zones of the two parties, the latter having the obligation to see that the zones allotted to them shall not constitute part of any military alliance and shall not be utilized for the resumption of hostilities or in the service of an aggressive policy. The Conference also takes note of the declarations of the Governments of Cambodia and Laos to the effect that they will not join in any agreement with other States if this agreement includes the obligation to participate in a military alliance not in conformity with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations or, in the case of Laos, with the principles of the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. So long as their security is not threatened, the obligation to establish bases on Cambodian or Laotian territory for the military forces of foreign powers.

6. The Conference recognizes that the essential purpose of the agreement relating to Vietnam is to settle military questions with a view to ending hostilities and that the military demarcation line is provisional and should not in any way be interpreted as constituting a political or territorial boundary. The Conference expresses its conviction that the execution of the provisions set out in the present declaration and in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities creates the necessary basis for the achievement in the near future of a political settlement in Vietnam.

7. The Conference declares that, so far as Vietnam is concerned, the settlement of political problems, effected on the basis of respect for the principles of independence, unity, and territorial integrity, shall permit the Vietnamese people to enjoy the fundamental freedoms, guaranteed by democratic institutions established as a result of free general elections by secret ballot. In order to ensure that sufficient progress in the restoration of peace has been made, and that all necessary conditions obtain for free expression of the national will, general elections shall be held in July 1956 under the supervision of an international commission composed of representatives of the Member States of the International Supervisory Commission, referred to in the agreement on the cessation of hostilities. Consultations will be held on this subject between the competent representative authorities of the two zones from July 20, 1955, onward.

8. The provisions of the agreements on the cessation of hostilities intended to ensure the protection of individuals and of property must be most strictly applied and must, in particular, allow everyone in Vietnam to decide freely in which zone he wishes to live.

9. The competent representative authorities of the North and South zones of Vietnam, as well as the authorities of Laos and Cambodia, must not permit any individual or collective reprisals against persons who had collaborated in any
way with one of the parties during the war, or against members of such persons' families.

10. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the Government of the French Republic to the effect that it is ready to withdraw its troops from the territory of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, at the request of the Governments concerned and within periods which shall be fixed by agreement between the parties except in the cases where, by agreement between the two parties, a certain number of French troops shall remain at specified points and for a specified time.

11. The Conference takes note of the declaration of the French Government to the effect that for the settlement of all the problems connected with the re-establishment and consolidation of peace in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, the French Government will proceed from the principle of respect for the independence and sovereignty, unity and territorial integrity of Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam.

12. In their relations with Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam, each member of the Geneva Conference undertakes to respect the sovereignty, the independence, the unity, and the territorial integrity of the above-mentioned States, and to refrain from any interference in their internal affairs.

13. The members of the Conference agree to consult one another on any question which may be referred to them by the International Supervisory Commission, in order to study such measures as may prove necessary to ensure that the agreements on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam are respected.


Anthony Eden, British Foreign Minister, chaired the final session of the Geneva Conference. There was evident haste to conclude. The conference had been in session for over three months. The few discordant notes struck at this final session foreshadowed future problems. Historical territorial disputes between the Vietnamese and Cambodians surfaced briefly. But far more ominous was the effort of the delegation from the State of Vietnam to dissociate itself from the political settlement outlined at Geneva. According to this government, an "agreement" with such an adversary [as the DRV] could only be a fool's bargain. "In US representa-

The Chairman (Mr. now been reached should take note of the out a list of the subject delegation has in front First, agreement on the cessation of hostilities in Cambodia. I wo agreements now incorp orating the supervision of t Commission and the jo I should also like to importance in connexi and documents on supp these Agreements that r ing further agreement s my colleagues, is that tl And it is desired that th force.

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M. Mendès-France (France terms of the Declaration.

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Mr. Chou En-lai (People's